

## JAPANESE CREATION MYTHS OF THE YAMATO CYCLE

There are two main compilations in which most of the surviving Japanese myths are recorded. Kojiki (records of ancient matters) and Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Japan) focus on the creation and the history of early Japan. They are based on Yamato Cycle, which focuses more on cosmology and is centered around Amaterasu, and Izumo Cycle, which comes afterwards and centered around Susanoo.



According to the myths of the Yamato Cycle, the world was a mass of particles or seeds floating in nothing in the beginning. In time, the interacting seeds created yang (heaven) from the good parts and yin (earth) from the heavier parts. Then the first three gods appeared in between that connected heaven and earth. A series of events followed this which has created an inhabitable place in the cosmos.

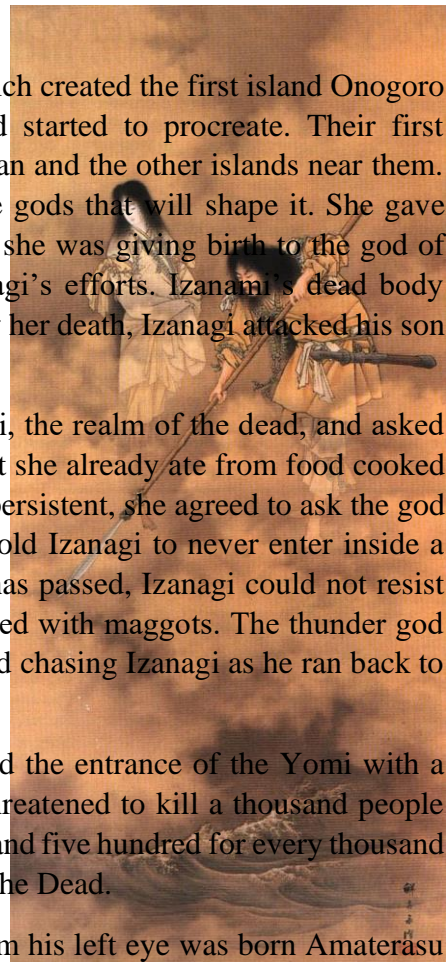
Then came the god Izanagi and the goddess Izanami which created the first island Onogoro in the empty ocean. They descended on this island and started to procreate. Their first successful offspring were the eight islands that formed Japan and the other islands near them. Being created the land, Izanami started giving birth to the gods that will shape it. She gave birth to the gods of sea, mountains, wind and such. When she was giving birth to the god of fire, her body was set aflame, and she died despite Izanagi's efforts. Izanami's dead body birthed more gods along with death and sorrow. Enraged by her death, Izanagi attacked his son Kagutsuchi, and more gods were born from his blood.

Saddened by Izanami's death, Izanagi ventured to Yomi, the realm of the dead, and asked her to come back to the land of the living. Izanami said that she already ate from food cooked in the Yomi and could not return. Seeing that Izanagi was persistent, she agreed to ask the god of the Yomi if she could go back with her husband. She told Izanagi to never enter inside a mansion while she was gone, and he agreed. After a day has passed, Izanagi could not resist and entered the mansion to see his wife's dead body infested with maggots. The thunder god that was born from her corpse and the angry goddess started chasing Izanagi as he ran back to the upper realm in terror.

When Izanagi reached the realm of the living, he closed the entrance of the Yomi with a giant boulder and pronounced the first divorce. Izanami threatened to kill a thousand people each day, and Izanagi replied he would father one thousand and five hundred for every thousand she killed. Izanami then became known as the Goddess of the Dead.

As Izanagi purified himself, from the water that fell from his left eye was born Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess. From his right eye was born Tsukuyomi no Mikoto, the moon god and from his nose was born Susanoo, the trickster god. Izanagi told Amaterasu to govern heaven, Tsukuyomi to govern the dominion of night and Susanoo to govern the sea.

Susanoo was dissatisfied with his share and asked his sister if he could live in heaven. He was permitted to stay in heaven, however as he is the trickster god, he started playing pranks on his sister. He committed many ritual offenses that enraged the goddess of sun. Amaterasu hid herself in a celestial cave and heaven and earth plunged into darkness. The other gods



gathered in front of the cave and tried many tricks to get the goddess to come out of the cave. When a goddess named Amenouzume no Mikoto started dancing half naked, the other gods started laughing and applauding. Amaterasu became curious and when she peeked outside the cave a strong god grabbed her and pulled her out of the cave. The light has returned to heaven and earth, and Susanoo was banished from heaven.

